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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON

29 DEC 1965

Honorable W. F. Raborn  
Director  
Central Intelligence Agency

Dear Red:

The Joint Chiefs of Staff have considered the United States Intelligence Board (USIB) study entitled "Infiltration and Logistics--South Vietnam" and the more recent intelligence on the use of Cambodian territory by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces as a source of supply, sanctuary, and fort temporary military facilities. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended (JCSM 812-65 of 12 Nov 65 attached) a series of specific actions to minimize such support in or from Cambodia.

One recommended course of action is to expand and intensify overall intelligence collection programs to further identify and define the nature and extent of support to PAVN/Viet Cong insurgency in or from Cambodia. This action as viewed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff would include collection programs as follows:

a. Intelligence agent collection nets in Cambodian cities, ports, and areas adjacent to the Cambodian/RVN border.

b. Conduct of extensive high altitude reconnaissance of Cambodia.

c. Maintenance of close air and surface surveillance of maritime shipping entering and departing Cambodian ports.

d. Conduct of covert ground cross-border information excursions by small teams into Cambodian territory.

Accomplishment of such undertaking by U.S. agencies envisages cooperation and assistance of intelligence collection agencies of allied nations operating in the area.

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ENCLOSURE

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Since future policy decisions relating to actions to counter use of Cambodia by PAVN/Viet Cong forces should be made on the basis of timely, reliable intelligence, it appears desirable to re-examine US/RVN assets, as well as those of friendly third countries, to determine further programs which might be developed to provide the necessary information. It is therefore, requested that you ask the USIB to undertake the necessary review and preparation of plans to obtain those additional data which are required to be responsive to this problem.

The Secretary of State concurs in this request.

Sincerely,



Enclosure

Cy #16 of JCSM 812-65 of 12 Nov 65

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THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

JCSM-812-65

12 November 1965

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: US Policy and Actions to Deal With Cambodian  
Support of the Viet Cong (S)

1. (TS) Recent studies by both the United States Intelligence Board (USIB) and the Defense Intelligence Agency (Appendix A) conclude that the Viet Cong (VC) use Cambodia for a source of supply, for a sanctuary, and for temporary military facilities. Supplies in the form of weapons, ammunition, medicine, and chemicals used in munitions have been captured during actual infiltration into South Vietnam (SVN) from Cambodia. There is considerable evidence, including reports of US Special Forces advisors, that the VC use Cambodian territory in some areas along the 600-mile border for sanctuary. There is also evidence that the VC have established temporary military facilities, such as rest camps, training areas, hospitals, work-shops, and storage depots on Cambodian soil. Recent reports from Phnom Penh disclose that Prince Sihanouk may start trading openly with the VC. Cambodia's deteriorating financial position may have led Sihanouk to reason that the advantages of trade arrangements with the VC would outweigh any sanctions brought to bear against him by Saigon or the United States.

2. (TS) Although the Cambodian Government has been careful not to provide the VC military support and has asserted its neutrality, Cambodians do permit the use of their territory and resources by the communist insurgents. This VC use of Cambodian territory is made possible by some active cooperation with the VC at lower Cambodian Government and military levels, an indifferent attitude by other officials, and the inability or failure of the Government to control or even patrol its frontiers. By permitting its country to be used as a source of supply, as a sanctuary, and for military facilities, Cambodia has forfeited its claim of neutrality.

\* Amembassy Bangkok Msg 041125Z (JCS IN 36637) and CIA Msg ☐  
☐ (JCS IN 40032)

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3. (TS) Recent reports indicate a continued buildup of VC/People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) troops in SVN. The increased requirements of this larger force (including a significant increment of regular troops), the determined Government of Vietnam/United States (GVN/US) efforts to seize the initiative in Southeast Asia, and the resulting higher level of military activity are causing the VC, as the USIB study points out, to place increasing dependency on outside sources of supply for arms and ammunition, technical equipment, medical supplies, cadre personnel, and trained technicians. With the GVN/US efforts to minimize infiltration through other land and sea routes being intensified, the importance of Cambodia to the VC insurgency can be expected to increase as the one remaining unimpaired support route available to them. The Cambodian sanctuary provides the VC with a decided military advantage and has a detrimental effect on the war effort in SVN.

4. (TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff have weighed the pros and cons of the specific actions that would be required to minimize Cambodian support of the VC and consider that the following factors are important to a resolution of the problem:

a. Cambodia is the only contiguous source of VC support against which no action is being taken. Since control of the insurgency involves seeking out and destroying the VC/PAVN forces and their sources of support, the reasons for taking action in this remaining area are militarily clear.

b. From a political viewpoint, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recognize a risk of antagonizing Prince Sihanouk by any forceful action, with a possibility that Cambodia may seek a closer relationship with Communist China. Although Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and/or CHICOM intervention appears unlikely, some increase in CHICOM military assistance to Cambodia may be expected.

c. The possible benefits derived from GVN/US observance of the inviolability of the Cambodian border must be weighed against the violation of South Vietnamese sovereignty by VC incursions into SVN and their use of Cambodia as a sanctuary. SVN's fundamental right of self-defense is compromised by a policy that prohibits effective counteraction. Further, the use of Cambodian territory by the VC, with immunity to pursuit, unduly inhibits field commanders in the defense of their areas and forces.

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5. (TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that the military requirements are of paramount importance and that forceful action must be taken to stop the use of Cambodian territory for VC logistics and sanctuary despite possible adverse political and military reaction.

6. (TS) It is understood that the Department of State is now in the process of reviewing US policy toward Cambodia. The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that this revision should be conducted on a priority basis. They have observed that relations with Cambodia have not improved as a result of current and past policies and that support of the VC is continuing. They consider that the present state of affairs, in which Cambodians are supporting the VC, is inconsistent with continued US recognition of Cambodian neutrality.

7. (TS) US policy toward Cambodia should provide for GVN/US action which will result in minimizing Cambodian support of the VC, including the reduction of infiltration of war materiel into SVN from Cambodia. In this regard, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have considered courses of action to accomplish that objective. Although there are risks associated with the application of the more severe courses of action, the Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that Cambodia's political and military reactions will be insignificant in relation to the gains made possible through suitable application of the pressures and actions recommended. These courses of action are:

- ✓ a. Course of Action A. Expand and intensify the over-all intelligence collection program for Cambodia.
- ✓ b. Course of Action B. Conduct a political/psychological campaign to persuade the Government of Cambodia to take actions to stop support of the VC.
- ✓ c. Course of Action C. Encourage third country participation in actions designed to bring pressure against Cambodia to stop support of the VC.
- ✓ d. Course of Action D. Increase surveillance of the sea lines of communication (LOCs) between the RVN and Cambodia and increase controls on the Mekong and Bassac waterways,
- ✓ e. Course of Action E. Conduct covert paramilitary operations into Cambodia to reduce the infiltration of personnel and materiel and to collect intelligence information.

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f. Course of Action F. Conduct low altitude aerial reconnaissance into Cambodia.

✓ g. Course of Action G. Authorize GVN/US operations into Cambodia in immediate pursuit of VC forces which are withdrawing into Cambodian territory.

h. Course of Action H. Conduct military operations to prevent entry of maritime shipping carrying contraband goods into Cambodian ports.

i. Course of Action I. Conduct overt air and/or ground cross-border operations into Cambodia against confirmed LOCs and facilities which support the VC insurgency.

Details of each course of action are contained in Appendix B.

8. (TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff conclude that Courses of Action A through G are appropriate and necessary for immediate implementation and that Courses of Action H and I may be necessary at a later date.

9. (TS) The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend that:

a. US policy toward Cambodia include, as an objective, the denial of Cambodian territory for the support of the VC insurgency.

b. Courses of Action A through G be approved for immediate implementation.

c. Courses of Action H and I be reserved for consideration pending the outcome of Courses of Action A through G.

d. A memorandum substantially as contained in Appendix C be forwarded to the Secretary of State.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

SIGNED  
DAVID L. McDONALD  
Acting Chairman  
Joint Chiefs of Staff

Attachments

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APPENDIX A

DIA STUDY

VIET CONG USE OF CAMBODIAN TERRITORY

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Appendix A

VIET CONG USE OF CAMBODIAN TERRITORY

The strategic location of Cambodia on mainland Southeast Asia, coupled with the escalation of the war in Vietnam, requires a reevaluation of the Cambodian situation and a sharp look at the available evidence to determine the extent of Cambodian complicity in the external support to the Viet Cong (VC).

In the past few years, Cambodian international political posture has undergone a departure from its enunciated policy of neutralism. Prince Sihanouk also is convinced that the Viet Cong will be successful in establishing a Communist state in South Vietnam. He believes this is a natural political development and in time the whole of Southeast Asia will be dominated by the Communist philosophy as delineated by Peking. Sihanouk apparently feels that he must make accommodations to a situation that appears to him to be inevitable. Under these circumstances, he is making efforts to ingratiate himself and his nation with the leaders of "the wave of the future" in order to retain Cambodian individuality, territorial integrity and security. In the past two years he has turned abruptly from the United States which he feels certain will be forced to withdraw from Asia. He has terminated US aid programs and has eliminated US diplomatic presence in Phnom Penh. On the other hand, he has tied the Cambodian Army logistically to the Red Chinese by the acceptance of a ChiCom military aid program that probably has equipped the Cambodian Army's tactical units with Chinese-made small arms. He has been consistent in his attacks on US foreign policy throughout the world using the standard Communist terms of reference to express his disapproval. Finally, in late August of this year, the Prince offered medical supplies to the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NFLSVN). Cambodia has, therefore, placed itself in a position that is diametrically opposed to US interests in the area.

The infiltration of war materiel into South Vietnam cannot be disputed. Sufficient non-indigenous ordnance items have been captured to establish materiel infiltration as a fact. During the past year the first bulk seizure of the new family of Chinese Communist small arms occurred in the delta. Prior to 1964, the capture of other weapons from the Communist Bloc was not uncommon. Explosives from outside of the RVN have been captured in caches and on the delta waterways. One of the questions to be examined is whether or not any of the infiltrated materiel transited neighboring Cambodia.

DIA has completed a study on the Viet Cong use of Cambodia in light of the present situation. All available data was reviewed, and from over 4,000 separate pieces of information more than 270 reports were included in the study such as: 42 prisoner of war interrogation reports; 30 official US and South Vietnamese reports; 18 captured materiel reports; 8 photo reconnaissance mission reports; 140 agent reports; and other classified data. Strong evidence is now on hand that the Viet Cong utilize Cambodia as a logistics base, as a transit area, as a sanctuary, as a base of communications and as a source of supply. There is circumstantial evidence that Cambodian ports are utilized for ingress of supplies destined for the Viet Cong. There is sufficient data on hand to conclude that the lower echelons of the Cambodian military and the civil services have knowledge of Viet Cong activities and in many cases actively collaborate with them. Finally, Cambodia's present political position added to recent admissions of agreements with the NFLSVN indicates growing complicity and collusion between the RKG and the Viet Cong.

The strong evidence referred to takes the following forms. On the use of Cambodia as a logistics base, DIA holds 17 POW interrogation reports in the 1964-1965 time frame. In these reports the prisoners state that they participated in or witnessed the purchase, and/or transportation of arms, ammunition, food, chemicals, medical supplies, etc., from Cambodia into South Vietnam. There is the hard evidence of the capture of weapons, ammunition, medicines, and chemicals during actual infiltration. DIA has in excess of 60 agent reports which confirm not only the general intelligence mentioned

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but also set forth the detailed methodology of Viet Cong logistical support from Cambodia. The Viet Cong use of Cambodia as an infiltration or transit area for personnel is confirmed by 10 POW reports of men who infiltrated from the DRV via Cambodia. In addition, there are 20 agent reports supporting their statements. The evidence that Cambodia is used by the Viet Cong as a sanctuary is overwhelming. This is supported by 18 POW reports, 53 agent reports over 80 recorded incidents of Viet Cong withdrawal into Cambodia as reported by US Special Forces Headquarters at Can Tho, South Vietnam and three photo reconnaissance missions. There are also 17 agent reports that indicate that Cambodia is used as a communications zone. These reports are supported by other classified data. On the subject of Cambodian low level collusion with the Viet Cong, DIA holds the following: 10 POW reports and 34 agent reports. Additionally, the following quotation from the August 1965 report of the British Military Attache in Phnom Penh is interesting. Quote.... However, I keep hearing alarming stories from a variety of commercial sources that the smuggling is large scale, continuous, and implicates almost everyone in the bureaucratic chain of command -- police, customs, army, the export licensing office, and the rice marketing board. Unquote.

Now, to turn to the mechanics of Viet Cong use of Cambodia. Supplies and materiel arrive in Cambodia by a variety of routes: the Mekong and Bassac Rivers to Phnom Penh; the sea routes to Sihanoukville and Kampot; the inland waterways from Laos; and the roads and trails from Laos. Once within Cambodia, personnel and supplies are moved as follows:

First, by porter or vehicle on motorable road approaches to the South Vietnam border. These routes provide access from Cambodian markets where Viet Cong cadres and purchasing agents can obtain necessary supplies. Evidence indicates that the Viet Cong portaging these supplies fan out into the complex of trails to cross the border.

Second, by sampan or junk on inland waterways leading to the central and the southern or delta areas of South Vietnam. Four inland water routes provide access to the central area, and six waterways provide access to the southern or delta areas. From these, connections with most points in the delta area can be established.

Third, by sea from the Cambodian ports via the Gulf of Siam to the west coast of South Vietnam and to the island of Phu Quoc.

In-file data clearly confirms that the following types of supplies and materiel enter South Vietnam from Cambodia.

1. Food.
2. Surgical equipment and medicines to include antibiotics.
3. Rifles, automatic weapons, recoilless rifles, mortars, grenades, mines and ammunition.
4. Potassium chlorate, potassium nitrate, sulphur, mercury and phosphorus.

A few statistics published overtly by the Royal Cambodian Government prove interesting. In 1960, 10 tons of potassium chlorate were imported; in 1963 (through September) 107 tons of potassium chlorate were imported. This material is not indigenous to Cambodia and present consumption of it is limited to approximately 10 tons per year. A recent analysis of Viet Cong mines and demolition charges showed them to contain more than 80% of potassium chlorate. Finally, the Government of South Vietnam has captured in excess of 40,000 pounds of chemicals on delta waterways in one period from March of 1963 to February 1964. Ninety-five per cent was potassium chlorate. Some of the bags containing

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the chemicals bore names of Cambodian firms in Phnom Penh. In many cases, the captured boatmen admitted bringing the chemicals in from Cambodia.

These statistics coupled with the data on captured materiel gives circumstantial evidence that the Cambodian ports are handling materiel destined for Viet Cong.

Phu Quoc Island is an interesting case in point. The southern half of the island is government controlled, while the northern half belongs to the Viet Cong. In the Gulf of Siam, the Viet Cong have a supply organization at Kampot, Cambodia. From here, supplies are brought over to northern Phu Quoc where there is a major logistics depot. From there, supplies are carried over to the mainland, using island steps.

One of the prime uses of Cambodia by the Viet Cong is for sanctuary. The weight of evidence here appears incontrovertable. Much of the information comes from interrogations of Viet Cong prisoners or defectors who actually crossed the border to seek a safe haven. Supporting data comes from the SVN army, photographic data of suspicious locations and agent reports. This data reveals that the Viet Cong utilize sanctuary for the following reasons:

1. When pursued by ARVN; operational reports from ARVN and US advisors continually mention that the Viet Cong in the border areas break contact and seek refuge in Cambodia.
2. As a training area; we have as examples the statements of POW Tran Van Quam, who attended a training school in Cambodia, and Tran Thi Tao, a female rallier who also trained in Cambodia.
3. As a staging area; POW Du Van Phuoc took part in an attack on an ARVN post near Vinh Yuong. He stated that the attack was launched from Cambodia, and upon failure to overrun the post, his group returned to base in Cambodia.
4. As logistics or hospital area; as an example, POW Nguyen Van Bo stated he observed Viet Cong wounded carried back to Cambodia to be treated after an operation in South Vietnam.
5. As a communications zone.

Intelligence data indicates that the important areas or spot locations of Viet Cong occupancy are:

1. The salient where the Laos-Cambodian-South Vietnam borders meet;
2. The Camp Rollande area;
3. The Mimot-Snoul area;
4. The Mount Lo Go area;
5. The "Parrot's Beak" area;
6. The Kas Kok-Thuong Phuoc area;
7. The Giong Bang area; and,
8. The Kampot-Ha Tien area.

The involvement of the Royal Cambodian Government in support of the Viet Cong cannot be conclusively proved at this time. However, the lower echelons of the Cambodian military and the civil services appear to be deeply involved with the Viet Cong in the border areas. As a result, the supposition is that

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the RKG is aware of much that has happened, but it officially closes its eyes and ears. There are numerous specific incidents of low level Cambodian knowledge of Viet Cong activities, and of outright Cambodian collusion with the Viet Cong.

Cambodian officials are aware of the excessive importation of chemicals which can be used for explosives. They are also aware of South Vietnamese claims that chemicals from Cambodia have been smuggled into South Vietnam.

Furthermore, recently Prince Sihanouk announced that Cambodia has provided the Viet Cong with medical supplies. Arrangements have been worked out in Hanoi.

In conclusion, Cambodia's geographical location with the many routes of approach to South Vietnam, provides the access and the safe haven the Viet Cong require. The Royal Cambodian Government has the political motivation to support the Viet Cong both overtly and covertly, and has expressed sympathy with their cause. Finally, the weight of evidence proves that Cambodia is being used by the Viet Cong and probably with its approval. Sir, this concludes the briefing. Are there any questions?

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APPENDIX B

COURSES OF ACTION

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Appendix B

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APPENDIX C

DRAFT MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE

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Appendix C

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